

March 1, 2020

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

Passage: Romans 8:18-22

Community Group Questions: “Waiting for Glory”

Read Romans 8:18-22 aloud as a group. And then work through the following questions:

1. In verse 18, Paul encourages Christian believers by reminding us that the sufferings of this life pale in comparison to the glory that we’ll experience in the life to come. Compare this verse with 2 Corinthians 4:17. What’s the logic of these verses, and how should they encourage us in the face of life’s greatest difficulties and trials?
2. Verse 19 tells us that all creation waits “with eager longing” (we might paraphrase: “standing on tiptoe”) for the “revealing of the sons of God.” This is a reference to the “revealing” of Jesus when he returns in glory, together with the “revealing” of all of God’s people as our souls are united to resurrection bodies equipped to live in the New Creation. Paul is personifying the physical universe here, but based on his language, what does he mean that all creation can’t wait for God’s people to be raised up in glory? How does this verse give Christians a unique perspective on our planet and on our universe?
3. Every world view has to grapple with the brokenness of our universe. Verses 20-21 tell us what went wrong with creation from a Biblical perspective. Notice the terms Paul uses: creation was “subjected to futility.” “Futility” is the word used in Ecclesiastes to describe the “vanity” of life that seems ephemeral and broken. Paul also tells us, in vs. 21, that creation is currently under “bondage to corruption.” We might translate this phrase “slavery to decay.” This is another way of describing how all creation is wearing down. All of Paul’s language here looks back to Genesis 3, where God cursed the “ground” because of Adam and Eve’s rebellion. Read Genesis 3:17-19. As you look at our world today, where do you see evidence that the earth is “subject to futility” under the curse? How should Christians view the brokenness of our world uniquely because of our theological perspective?
4. Verses 20-21 also speak about the future hope of all creation, which will be liberated from the curse and transformed, obtaining “freedom” and “glory.” Read the following texts to explore the theme that the current universe will one day be transformed into a “New Heaven and New Earth”: Isaiah 65:17, Matt. 19:28, 1 Peter 1:4, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1-4, 22:1-5. Does it surprise you to see that our ultimate destination as believers is a New Creation where we will live in physical, resurrection bodies, in a New Earth where God himself dwells among us? Does this vision of eternity excite your imagination? Does it strengthen your hope? How so?
5. The theology of the earth’s future transformation, as seen in Romans 8, should give Christians a great advantage in the current political discussion about environmental care. Christians should neither worship nor neglect creation, but rather, we should see ourselves as stewards of God’s creation, which is cursed

now, but awaiting glory. We should be both realistic and hopeful at the same time! Would you agree that Christians should be the best and wisest environmentalists? How so?

6. Verse 22 suggests that right now, as creation waits for future glory, it “groans.” In other words, when we look out at our world and see famines, earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, death, destruction, war, the “daily grind,” cancer, deadly viruses, scraped knees, and fatal accidents, we should understand these forms of sufferings as “groans” like labor pains. Labor pains are endurable because a mother knows that new life is on its way! Likewise, when Christians hear the “groans” of our current world, we know it points to the new creation that is coming! How should this unique perspective give Christian believers hope when they read of the many earthly tragedies in the daily headlines?

Prayer suggestion: Thank God for his creation and for the hope of the New Creation. Pray for a deepening longing for eternity, and for wisdom in caring for creation today.